

University Impact Area Solutions Study (DRAFT 02-11-16)

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Overall Vision

The University Impact Area Solutions Study is a strategic plan for the neighborhoods surrounding the University of Cincinnati.

The vision for the future of the study area is to preserve the unique character of these diverse, multi-generational neighborhoods through appropriate density of new development, more efficient communication, education, and collaboration between neighborhood stakeholders who identify and resolve problems and issues, while working together to create realistic and implementable solutions, capitalize on existing resources, resulting in safe, clean, attractive, connected, and well-maintained neighborhoods.

The Five Initiatives

At the core of the University Impact Area Solutions Study, there are five primary focus areas that we must collectively work together in order to reach the future that we envision.

Zoning & New Development: To address current and future zoning to protect and enhance long-established residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings, parks and green space, and guide new development to be in harmony with the unique fabric of the neighborhoods while still allowing them to evolve and improve.

Housing & Neighborhood Conditions: To address housing and property concerns, code violations including Zoning, Housing, Building, and Fire Codes.

Quality of Life: To improve the neighborhood experience by addressing quality of life issues such as crime and safety; trash, litter, and blight; and parties, alcohol use, noise, and public nuisances.

Connectivity: To address concerns relative to bicycle routes and safety; pedestrian mobility and safety; to increase transportation alternatives and options; and to address traffic flow and safety.

Parking: To address on-street and off-street parking.

Zoning & New Development

Mission: To address current and future zoning to protect and enhance long-established residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings, parks and green space, and guide new development to be in harmony with the unique fabric of the neighborhoods while still allowing them to evolve and improve.

1. Retain and promote unique cultural and architectural characteristics of the older urban neighborhoods surrounding the University of Cincinnati.

- A. Designate landmarks, districts, and unique cultural and architectural sites in the neighborhoods.
 - i. Identify these with the Zoning & New Development Working Group of the University Impact Area Solutions Study, the City of Cincinnati's Historic Conservation Office, and the City's consultant inventory of sites of historic merit.
- B. Revise the language in the Zoning Code within the residential zoning districts related to signage.
 - i. Design and implement stricter regulations and standards for permanent and temporary signage within all Single-Family (SF) and Residential Multi-Family (RM) zoning districts.
 - ii. Reflect the revised regulations and standards in the draft Land Development Code.

2. Establish where growth and density should be located in the areas near the University of Cincinnati.

- A. Evaluate the current Zoning Code and proposed Land Development Code zoning district locations and boundaries.
 - i. Rezone specific areas that are recommended by the Zoning and New Development Working Group of the University Impact Area Solutions Study.
 - ii. Reflect the rezoning recommendations in the draft Land Development Code for consistency.
- B. Develop an overlay district to regulate growth and density in a specific area.
 - i. Study further and potentially establish a "University Area Planning Overlay District" in the Zoning Code with regulations focused on the compatibility of new development and improving the livable environment.
 - ii. Identify and establish an appropriate boundary for the "University Area Planning Overlay District."
 - iii. Consider establishing a University Area Review Board, which can serve as an architectural review body that considers plans on a case-by-case basis within the University Area Planning Overlay District. *(CHBA / CHCURC asked that this Action Step be deleted because it adds another layer of bureaucracy and we already have a City Planning Commission).*

Housing & Neighborhood Conditions

Mission: To address housing and property concerns, code violations including Zoning, Housing, Building, and Fire Codes.

1. Develop and maintain quality housing.

- A. Implement a comprehensive residential rental inspection and certificate program. (*CHBA / CHCURC asked that this type of program be voluntary and not mandatory, with tangible benefits to landlords that participate*).
 - i. Work with Hamilton County Auditor, UC and neighborhood business associations to generate and maintain a list of landlords with accurate contact information, including phone numbers and email addresses.
 - ii. Work with the neighborhood to identify problem properties and absentee landlords.
 - iii. Develop and present a landlord training program geared to the issues specific to this area.
 - iv. Develop a self-funding inspection program for residential rental properties in this area. Well maintained and managed property will be on a 4 year inspection cycle, while others will be on an annual inspection cycle.
 - v. Work with landlords to come up with a plan to bring buildings up to code, including creating a hierarchy of importance of what needs to be fixed first, and what can wait.
- B. Provide incentives to maintain properties.
 - i. Make landlords aware of existing tax breaks for increased value when making building/property improvements. This could be done through existing meetings such as the regular meetings of the Neighborhoods of Uptown.
 - ii. Develop amnesty program to fix violations for landlords who voluntarily come forward for inspections.
 - iii. Increase penalties for repeat offenders, such as placing fines as a lien on the property's taxes.
- C. Increase homeownership.
 - i. Create a community development corporation to rehab rent-to-own homes. CHCURC is working with CUFNA on an agreement for a newly initiated effort to take on single-family home renovations in the community with the goal of increasing home ownership.
 - ii. Develop incentives for professors/young professionals to move to the area and work with the major institutions and realtors in the area to discuss the benefits of living in the neighborhood.
 - iii. Work with University of Cincinnati students/professors to buy and fix up project houses.
 - iv. Work with the Port Authority of Greater Cincinnati to make the university area a target area and go after tax delinquent properties.
 - v. Apply to be a part of the City's Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP).

2. Increase communication and collaboration between stakeholders.

- A. Encourage the University of Cincinnati to develop and implement a public information program about off-campus housing.
 - i. Expand the University of Cincinnati Department of Housing and Food Services to include resources for off-campus housing, including a list of landlords and inspected properties.
 - ii. Develop information packets for landlords to give to students on move-in day about how to be a good neighbor.
- B. Increase stakeholder collaboration.
 - i. Hold a quarterly meeting between the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati and University of Cincinnati Police, and surrounding neighborhoods, and business associations to discuss common goals and issues.
 - ii. Increase communication between students, parents, landlords, and the University of Cincinnati.
 - iii. Develop a database for repeat student violators and share the list with landlords and University of Cincinnati Student Affairs.

Quality of Life

Mission: To improve the neighborhood experience by addressing quality of life issues such as crime and safety; trash, litter, and blight; and parties, alcohol use, noise, and public nuisances.

1. Collaborate between the neighborhood stakeholders and the public safety departments of both the University of Cincinnati and the City of Cincinnati to enforce laws and provide education.

- A. Continue work to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Cincinnati and the City of Cincinnati to allow their police departments to continue to work together.
 - i. UC Police should continue to patrol the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the University of Cincinnati, especially in areas where students live. This allows an extra level of security and faster response times.
- B. Continue to educate all neighborhood stakeholders with accurate crime statistics and encourage community involvement in mitigation of crime.
 - i. Both the Cincinnati Police Department and UC Police should continue to attend all appropriate community meetings to discuss statistics, trends, and hotspots.
 - ii. Crime statistics and prevention tips should continue to be available on the web.
 - iii. Continue to use social media (such as Nextdoor) to exchange information with neighborhood stakeholders and law enforcement personnel.
 - iv. Market the safety of the neighborhoods. Tell the story about how the neighborhoods surrounding the University of Cincinnati actually are actually some of the safest neighborhoods in the City of Cincinnati. Crime is lower than it has been in decades but there is an untrue perception of danger.
- C. Enforce the law consistently and fairly in all neighborhoods.
 - i. Enforce all crime and disruption, including noise, parking, litter, and other quality of life offenses.
 - ii. Revisit the City of Cincinnati's Noise Ordinance and revise it to make it more enforceable. Consider using distance instead of decibels to make it easier for police to enforce without special equipment.
 - iii. Revisit the City of Cincinnati's Snow Removal ordinance and develop a plan to better enforce the policy. Bring together all of the departments involved with this and determine who has the resources to perform this function. Consider whether increasing the fine is necessary and set a more definitive time that properties are in violation.
 - iv. Educate both property owners and tenants about the importance of snow removal for pedestrian safety. Dispel the myths about snow removal liability.
 - v. Ensure that students are cited in most effective manner for illegal behavior, either by Cincinnati Police or UC Judicial Affairs.
 - vi. Continue to work with and expand Citizens on Patrol to provide both Cincinnati and UC Police with on-the-ground assistance.

2. Decrease the amounts of trash, litter, and blight in the neighborhoods.

- A. Improve understanding and compliance by both students and residents in the neighborhoods about City policies and good-neighbor expectations.
 - i. Develop marketing/educational materials such as flyers, magnets, door-hangers, stickers on trash bins, or other materials with pick-up days, websites, frequently-asked-questions, good-neighbor property maintenance tips and expectations, and important contact information.
 - ii. Create and sell/give away bungee cord kits to help keep lids closed and prevent litter from trash cans being knocked over by wind, cars, or animals.
 - iii. Ensure that litter on private property is being reported so that enforcement can take place.
 - iv. Enforce litter laws more strictly or consider revising litter laws to make laws easier to enforce.
 - v. Increase number of pick-up days for corner cans from 2 days per week to 3 days per week. (*From DPS: not possible unless additional funding is added to budget*).
- B. Develop a comprehensive program that utilizes students and residents to help both clean up litter and blighted areas and educate.
 - i. Continue to coordinate with students who need volunteer hours.
 - ii. Work with Hughes High School to provide continual education/public awareness to their students about litter. UC students would be in an ideal position to educate peer to peer.
 - iii. Design an ambassador program similar to Downtown Cincinnati Inc. to pick up litter, notify about illegal dumping or overflowing corner cans, and help educate both residents and visitors. Consider whether expanding existing student programs (such as Clean Up Cincy) or creation of new program that includes non-students is most appropriate. Clifton Heights Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation has one employee that does some of this work already in the business district at a small-scale level.
- C. Continue to refine efforts during the UC move-in/move-out time to ensure a seamless transition, resulting in cleaner streets, sidewalks, and yards, and less dumping.
 - i. Continue to analyze the length of the move-in/move-out period, communication with renters about services and expectations, and ensuring that neighborhood stakeholders are engaged in and connected to this process.
 - ii. Consider working with Time Warner Cable or other utilities to help communicate to renters.
 - iii. Develop education or programs to encourage renters to give away or sell unwanted items (to local charities or other people) instead of throwing away. Consider a “sustainability corral” and encourage a take-and-leave policy for a certain period of time and partner with a local charity to collect on a certain date.
 - iv. Continue to refine Department of Public Services’ extra collections and dumpster collections that coincide with spring move-out. Because some rental periods end on the 1st of the month, others on the 15th, work with

landlords, renters, and donation services to ensure that items are disposed of in the appropriate extra collection week.

3. Mitigate negative effects of large or wild parties on the neighborhoods.

- A. Continue to develop a “Landlord Notification Policy” related to out of control and reoccurring parties that are disruptive to the neighbors.
 - i. Continue to track and progressively enforce problem parties that are large, wild, or reported by neighbors.
 - ii. Work with landlords and law enforcement personnel to reinstate the policy with Cincinnati Police and University Police to keep a list of landlord names, properties, and phone numbers and give law enforcement personnel permission to go onto properties and shut down parties.
 - iii. Contact landlords/property managers/property owners after problem parties occur.
 - iv. Cite landlords/property managers/property owners if problems persist.
 - v. Consider legal limit of number of persons allowed for rental properties.
- B. Continue to develop a “Student Party Amnesty Policy” to allow students to feel safe reporting their own party if it gets out of control.
 - i. Work to further develop the policy and better educate students to help understand that they can shut down their own party without penalty if it inadvertently gets out of control.
- C. Work together to proactively prevent and appropriately enforce problem parties, excessive use of alcohol and drugs, and use of alcohol by minors.
 - i. Work with UC Police, Cincinnati Police, and Citizens on Patrol to report parties, spillover from parties, and large roaming groups looking for parties in residential areas.
 - ii. Ensure that students are cited in most effective manner for problem parties, either by Cincinnati Police or UC Judicial Affairs. (Currently they report jointly).

4. Help create a culture shift by developing new policies and education about expectations of residents and property owners in the City of Cincinnati.

- A. Use a multi-pronged approach to working with University of Cincinnati students through policies and creative education.
 - i. Start by using “Welcome Week” for new students to begin to educate them about their role, whether they live on or off campus, as residents of Cincinnati.
 - ii. Use social media whenever possible to emphasize the information, including teaching them about the Live Safe App.
 - iii. Provide marketing materials such as magnets, pens, t-shirts, hats, koozies, etc. to help enforce the message.
 - iv. Enforce requirement for all freshmen to live on campus or with their parents. Currently, only students living 50 miles away or more are required to live on campus.
 - v. Teach a “Living in the Neighborhood” class for credit, required for all students moving off campus, to teach life-skills, good-neighbor skills, and

- impress that they are residents of Cincinnati not just UC. Involve members of the community, city, police, as guest speakers.
- v. Develop “Student Ambassadors” to form a Community Action Team to help educate and assist fellow students about their role and responsibilities as neighborhood residents. Consider whether expanding existing student programs or creation of new program is most appropriate.
- B. Work together to better educate landlords and property owners about expectations of property owners in neighborhoods surrounding the University of Cincinnati.
- i. Develop a Rental Registration program in the neighborhoods surrounding UC to keep track of all property owners renting their premises and ensure safe living conditions (*this will be further developed in the Housing and Neighborhood Conditions chapter*).
 - ii. Provide training to landlords/property owners/property managers about the unique nature of renting to students, including expectations regarding litter, trash, noise, public safety laws, and the student code of conduct. Make sure the trainings are scheduled, advertised, detailed, and feature other local property owners as speakers.
 - iii. Develop perks for property owners to go through training such as: Free advertisement with students; Student Referrals (to more than just large facilities); Greater/more frequent access to trash/litter clean-ups; Access to free student labor; etc.
 - iv. Survey the neighborhood to see what rental opportunities are available from both larger, institutional products as well as property owners with small numbers of units.
 - v. Develop a support network, formally or informally, to mentor newer property owners and encourage better communication among the property owners. Support network could stem from an existing group or meeting or could be new. Communication should include face-to-face, emails, and website.
 - vi. Send letters jointly-signed by neighborhood stakeholders and the University of Cincinnati to property owners/landlords/property managers of properties that are frequent violators of laws or policies.

Connectivity

Mission: To address concerns relative to bicycle routes and safety; pedestrian mobility and safety; to increase transportation alternatives and options; and to address traffic flow and safety.

1. Expand options for a more efficient and connective transit system.

- A. Expand and coordinate a more seamless shuttle service in the study area.
 - i. Use the Uptown Shuttle Review (2015) as a guide to determine a more universal system.
 - ii. Coordinate with the Uptown Consortium, the University of Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Zoo and health organizations that operate shuttles to establish a global organization (such as a Transportation Demand Management Association) to oversee shuttles and parking for the area's major employers.
 - iii. Explore opportunities for residents to use the institutional shuttle service.
 - iv. Expand shuttle services further south to increase ridership.
- B. Coordinate with SORTA to expand, improve, and market the utilization of transit services.
 - i. Reestablish a more simplified system of using one pass for bus services.
 - ii. Explore the creation or reincorporate various routes including crosstown, east side, west side, and Fairview turnaround bus routes with limited stops.
 - iii. Find ways to increase education and market the SORTA system.
- C. Study and implement Phase 2 of the Streetcar in the Uptown area.
 - i. Study the potential streetcar route and seek out funding sources.
 - ii. Implement the next phase of the Streetcar to reach the Uptown area.

2. Design, implement, and incentivize bicycle solutions.

- A. Advocate and educate for bicycle safety to expand ridership.
 - i. Utilize resources of DOTE and the University of Cincinnati to conduct a study about existing bike connections and recommendations for safer biking.
- B. Enhance the off-street bicycle network and look for opportunities for connections.
 - i. Update the City of Cincinnati Bike Plan in the study area.
 - ii. Coordinate with the Trails Alliance on making connections.
 - iii. Implement innovative methods to creating a safer environment for bicycles (i.e. the bike box) on-street and particularly at intersections.
- C. Encourage biking as an alternative to automobile use.
 - i. Coordinate with the University of Cincinnati and Uptown Consortium to explore incentives for students/employees to use transit/bike/walk to campus/work such as parking bikes in secured locations, showers/locker rooms, and providing maps of the bicycle network.
 - ii. Work with Red Bike to provide enhanced education on their services in addition to encourage the use of helmets.

3. Design and implement a safe and integrated pedestrian network.

- A. Exploration and implementation of thoughtful designs of pedestrian crosswalks.

- i. Coordinate with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to use their accident database to determine high crash locations involving pedestrians.
 - ii. Utilize the resources of the University of Cincinnati to conduct a survey to determine locations where people are concerned for pedestrian safety.
 - iii. Use appropriate methods (i.e. curb bumpouts, enhanced crosswalks, etc.) at targeted intersections in the study area to improve safety.
- B. Make street improvements to further ensure the safety and accessibility of pedestrians.
 - i. Continue to increase and improve lighting along targeted corridors.
 - ii. Implement increased pedestrian signal clearance times according to the new federal standards.
 - iii. Develop a public service awareness education campaign to promote safety of all road users, particularly bicycles and pedestrians.

4. Manage the overall flow of traffic and encourage other modes of transportation.

- A. Update the Uptown Transportation Study (2006).
 - i. Coordinate with Uptown Consortium, ODOT, City Department of Transportation and Engineering, and OKI in order to update and prioritize recommendations.
- B. Explore methods of controlling traffic flow of automobiles, transit, bicycles and pedestrians.
 - i. Determine if a reduction of speed limits are warranted on any roadways.
 - ii. Consider changes to on street parking restrictions.
 - iii. Consider wayfinding in the study area to supplement the Uptown Wayfinding within the larger private campus area.
- C. Enhance pedestrian wayfinding around the study area.
 - i. Implement a universally designed area pilot program that elevates wayfinding in interior areas of campus.
- D. Encourage the use of other modes of transportation through multiple solutions.
 - i. Incentivize carpooling through reducing prices of parking.
 - ii. Locate areas to build commuter parking lots and more efficiently use existing parking facilities to connect with the shuttle system and other transportation modes.

Parking

Mission: To address on-street and off-street parking.

1. Enforce parking and revise parking regulations.

- A. Use a multi-pronged approach to cover enforcement of parking.
 - i. Coordinate with the University of Cincinnati Police to delegate enforcement of parking on residential streets to prevent cars blocking driveways, front yard parking, and increase enforcement during special events (i.e. UC football games).
 - ii. Train a local task force to conduct parking enforcement during peak hours.
- B. As part of the proposed University Area Planning Overlay District for the study area, include a revision of parking regulations.
 - i. Consider revising parking standards for multi-family buildings for new development from regulating parking spaces per unit to parking spaces per bed.
 - ii. Consider eliminating the “No Parking” provision from 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. on Calhoun and McMillan.

2. Explore and study a residential permit parking program.

- A. The Department of Transportation and Engineering will conduct a study to determine the appropriateness of a residential permit parking program.
 - i. Coordinate with and survey residents, business owners and the University of Cincinnati to help determine the feasibility of a program.
- B. If a residential permit parking program is deemed appropriate, implement a pilot program on designated streets of the study area.

3. Create more parking opportunities through revisions of parking regulations and new parking lots/garages.

- A. As part of the proposed University Area Planning Overlay District, revise parking standards to maximize use of multi-family parking lots.
 - i. Allow multi-family residential parking to be rented to nearby tenants while also improving the landscaping standards for parking lots.
 - ii. Allow tandem parking to count towards parking requirements with a provision that it is properly regulated.
 - iii. Add zoning language that increases the distance from 600 feet to ¼ mile for off-site parking on nearby lots to serve a use and where that off-site parking cannot be located in a Single-Family zoning district.
 - iv. Identify vacant lots suitable for adding off-street parking.
 - v. Explore ways to make parking viable on 25 foot wide lots (current Code requirements are 35 foot wide lots for turnaround purposes).
- B. Coordinate with the University of Cincinnati to explore parking opportunities.
 - i. Determine amount of land available to create more parking on campus.
 - ii. Research various methods to decreasing congestion on residential streets through incentivizing or assigning parking spots to employees on campus.